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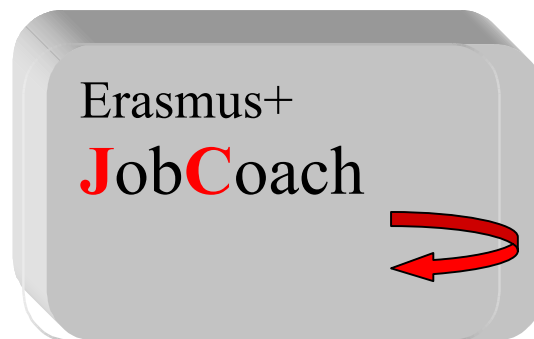
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Erasmus+ - project „Job coach for persons with disabilities”



European quality standards for the profession Job Coach for persons with disabilities (Edited by Hanns Rüdiger Röttgers and Caterina Metje, Fachhochschule Münster)

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These suggestions for European quality standards for a “Job Coach for persons with disabilities” were developed under the responsibility of the project partner Fachhochschule (University of Applied Sciences) Münster. The basis of the result are examinations in the participating partner countries. All project partners supported the development of the product. Here are mentioned:



Beroepsvereniging Jobcoaches Nederland
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Queen's University Belfast
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Les Genêts d'Or
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Stowarzyszenie Wsparcie Społeczne JaTyMy
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EKON
Poland

Introduction

„Job Coach“ or its equivalent in the respective national languages (eg. „Trener Pracy“ in Polish) hasn't got the status of a established profession (defined a.o. by specific knowledge, common education, shared theoretical framework, professional history, organization and ethics, technical autonomy, specific instruments). That is also true for specific subgroups of „Job Coaches“, e.g. those for young persons, the elderly or persons with disabilities.

Whereas we found out a more or less common understanding of the scope of a JC in general – a minimal consensus could be stated as „personal on-site assistance in occupation, other than therapeutic, technical, educational, for persons with specific needs“ –details will be stated later in this document- the practical reality differs widely. With regard to the ESCO system, a JC could be conceived as new occupation in the 2423 group.

In some state-financed programmes, (widely differing even on a national level) standards as to formal education and professional experience of a JC are required; however, in most countries a „self-defined“ access to a function of a JC can also be found. Even within one country, public authorities use different understandings and definitions of a JC.

So, there have been attempts to self-organize JC professional standards by (voluntary) professional organisations such as „Beroepsvereniging“ in the Netherlands.

As stated above, the central element in all countries might be defined as „personal on-site assistance in occupation, other than therapeutic, technical, educational, for persons with specific needs“.

However, we found out major differences as to

- qualification of a JC

- financing

- exclusivity of service for the employee / parallel counseling service for colleagues and/or employer

- access to JC services

- autonomy of clients. The latter aspect is even more crucial as far as persons with disabilities are concerned whereas a JC in general might also address conditions like motivational deficits or lacks of workplace-specific qualification issues.

In such a situation, two strategies for a possible European Framework can be applied: one could try to find a common denominator which turns out to be the lowest (or even refrain from regulations at all) or one could try to define standards that are defined by science and/or necessity. The first solution is quite common in EU history in those cases where no vital interests are at stake. E.g. the qualification standards (or the absence thereof) of a person offering dog grooming services may differ widely without any danger for consumer rights, individual health or safety. The second one is common for historically established professions like physicians. There is a strict European framework regulation a.o. of university curricula and job access. Obviously, consumer rights, safety and (individual and public) health require a regulation here; free movement of labour is only possible if possible risks are taken into account by setting standards.

Taking into account the specific importance of JC for persons with disabilities (JC/D) in the job market and the responsibility taken by those working in that profession, a qualification framework seems mandatory.

So, the first major task of this project was to determine general quality standards every JC/D should have - regardless of the specific nature or range of disabilities he or she deals with in practice.

Therefore we began collecting information and data describing the status quo. We compiled this information via a standardised questionnaire. The instrument covered the following aspects:

- Are there already standards in the respective countries, legally codified or unwritten?
- Is the term 'job coach' used by authorities, assurances, employment offices? Are there equivalent terms in the respective countries that are established in legal or practical use?
- Do other professions exist in the same or comparable working fields and what is their scope of responsibilities?
- Are there generally accepted or even legally binding standards defining the formal education a job coach should have?

As this project not only was to describe the common practice but also to develop suggestions for new normative rules, we asked our participants how a JC/D should be qualified in their opinion. As all our participants possess knowledge and experience in this area we considered this as a good starting point for this key question.

Supporting persons with disabilities in the workplace being their daily duty, our participants will also develop suggestions for respective national concepts of how to integrate the views and opinions of persons with disabilities as well as those of their (potential) employers, their families, and therapists.

Our international group covers very different approaches to the topic.

Some of our partners work as job coaches themselves.

Others help entrepreneurs establish companies to integrate people with disabilities into workplaces.

They also run projects in which people with disabilities are directly integrated into the primary labour market.

Two of our partners are involved in a program that intends to arm persons with disabilities for the working world by improving their health as well as their social life. This program addresses people with different chronic diseases, such as diabetes, spinal disc herniation or major depressive disorder.

As for the universities in our group, they run practical research projects. The students are being trained to help – amongst others – young adults with autism spectrum disorder develop their potential and to support their inclusion in school and labour market.

By this broad range of perspectives, we are hopeful that most relevant aspects are covered.

In the following text, we describe the summarized results of our survey as well as suggestions for the profession JC/D. Most suggestions were based on a consensus among all partners, some result from majority decisions.

1. Relevant conditions, limitations, disabilities and disorders that should be part of a curriculum for a JC/D

Via a questionnaire the international project partners collected information about the required qualifications a Job Coach should or must have on his/her disposal.

As for a JC in general, there was a broad consensus that (amongst others)

Knowledge about the general and professional education system
Knowledge about the interaction between (potential) employers and state agencies and bodies supporting employment
Knowledge about the respective legal frameworks for unsupported and supported labour
Knowledge about common application and placement procedures
Knowledge about the conditions for apprenticeships, internships, non-permanent occupation
Knowledge about work and organizational psychology
Knowledge and experience in conflict moderation and solution techniques
Knowledge in the fields of the respective job environment.

are required.

A Job Coach commissioned with the integration of disabled people in the first labour market must additionally dispose of specialised knowledge about the different disabilities and potentials of the target group. He/she should be able to evaluate in which way and to what extent these disabilities have an influence on the individual perspective for finding a job with social insurance contribution in the first labour market.

In particular, a Job Coach should have in-depth knowledge about:

Pervasive development conditions like autism spectrum disorders
Intellectual disability
Psychotic disorders like schizophrenia, major depression and bipolar disorder
Non-psychotic psychiatric conditions like anxiety, obsessive-compulsive disorders, somatoform, eating and personality disorders
Childhood based behavioural conditions like attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder

Besides this, optionally additional knowledge could be helpful in these fields:

Sensory disabilities like impaired vision (auditory functions), blindness (deafness)
Physical disabilities like amputation, paralysis
Physically determined communication problems
Addiction and substance abuse
Childhood based learning conditions like dyslexia, dyscalculia without cognitive impairments
Inclusion problems of persons who have been out of work due for example to cancer, back injury/spinal problems etc. or persons who have lost touch with the labour market due to long unemployment

There was a consensus that for some health-related issues like sensory disabilities and wheelchair dependency established support pathways do already exist. This is also the case in issues where a primarily technical support is needed. Basic knowledge about those issues is desirable for a JC/D; however, we agreed upon focusing on the first group of conditions quoted above for curricular contents.

2. Legal situation concerning the defined term “Job Coach”

I. A survey carried out among the partners of the project gives the following picture of the regulation of the status of the term *Job Coach* in the countries taking part in the project (France, Germany, Netherlands, Poland, United Kingdom):

In no country, “*Job Coach*” exists in the form of a specific and/or fully defined legal term, that is true even more for the “subspecialisation” for persons with disabilities. However, in the Netherlands the term “Job Coach” is used in the content of laws and sublegal regulations without reference to a standard. In Poland the term “Trener Pracy”¹ first appeared in the implementing act to the Act of 27.08.1997 r. on vocational and social rehabilitation and employment of disabled persons in the Resolution No. 8/2007 of the Supervisory Board PFRON² dated 06.04.2007 r. on the approval of the pilot program “COACH WORK – supported employment for people with disabilities”, but neither defines qualification standards. Furthermore, the scope is restricted to the respective projects.

In Germany, there are various initiatives and regional public sector projects referring to a “Job Coach UB”, “UB” standing for “supported employment” (cf. Landschaftsverband Westfalen-Lippe³) as well as “JC” positions specifically addressing eg. persons with ASD (cf. auticon GmbH⁴).

So, in three of the five countries taking part in the project the term “Job Coach” is used by private and public institutions acting on behalf of persons with disabilities. This is not the case in France and the United Kingdom.

In the Netherlands, in general the standard developments appears to be most advanced in comparison, resulting a.o. in a nationwide professional organization. Poland also shows advanced developments; however, even in these countries binding legal definitions have yet to be established.

¹ Trener pracy (Coach work) is the equivalent Job Coach

² PFRON – Państwowy Fundusz Osob Niepełnosprawnych, State Fund for the Disabled, Polish public administration body supporting the rehabilitation and employment of disabled persons

³ <http://www.lwl-jobcoaching.de/weiterbildung>

⁴ <https://www.nachhaltigejobs.de/@auticon>

3. Professions that are not called “Job Coach” but deal with the same or similar issues

There is a large variety of professional support for the successful employment of persons in state agencies and the private sector. This comprises general and specific information and counseling services, financial and legal support as well as reintegration services and occupational psychology and science.

So, parts of the scope of a job coach may be covered.

However, we found no other profession covering all the issues relevant for a JC/D as defined in the introduction.

4. Funding for the work of a JC/D

Preliminary remark

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD 2006) obliges signatory states to ‘adopt all appropriate legislative, administrative and other measures for the implementation of the rights recognized in the present Convention’ (UNCRPD 2006, p. 5). In terms of employment support, Article 26 states that signatories must ‘organize, strengthen and extend comprehensive habilitation and rehabilitation services and programmes, particularly in the areas of health, employment, education and social services’ (UNCRPD 2006, p.19). To this end, they must undertake early identification of needs and skills, and also ‘promote the development of initial and continuing training for professionals and staff working in habilitation and rehabilitation services’ (ibid.). It goes on to enshrine the rights of person with disabilities to gain full employment in Article 27; these rights include ‘reasonable accommodation’ in the workplace and ‘work experience in the open labour market’ (UNCRPD 2006, p.20). Article 27 further outlines State responsibility to ‘[p]romote vocational and professional rehabilitation, job retention and return-to-work programmes for persons with disabilities’ (ibid.). Thus the UNCRPD also indicates national obligations in regard to financial resourcing of employment programmes, which has direct relevance for the current job support situation as well as the future development of the position of Job Coaches. In this chapter, we discuss the funding of Job Coaches (or related professions) among the partner States involved in this project, all of whom are signatories to the UNCRPD, and who have ratified it (i.e. enshrined it in law)⁵. Therefore, they are legally committed to the fundamental principles outlined above, which relate directly to the types of support and training required by Job Coaches.

Status quo in partner countries

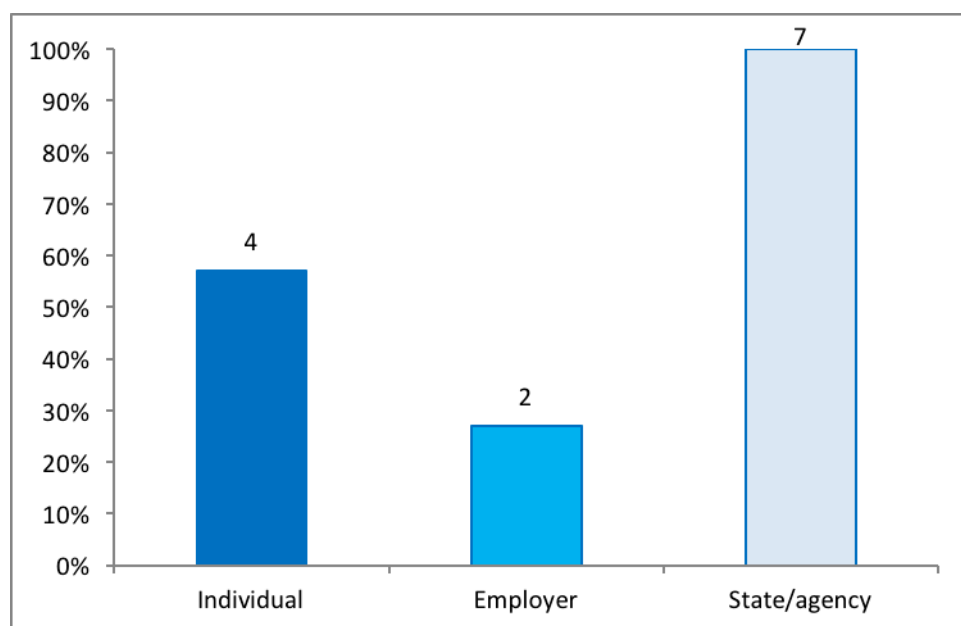
Partners were asked how Job Coaches (or related professions/functions) were presently funded in their national region: by the person with disabilities, by the employer, by state or other public agencies, or by any other means. Responses are summarized in Figure 1 and Table 1, and discussed in more detail below.

Results: responses regarding financial arrangements

Figure 1 shows that all the partner organisations indicated state funding (through a variety of mechanisms) was available for job support positions; less commonly, individuals with disabilities were expected to meet all or some of the costs (again, through a variety of mechanisms) and more rarely again, employers provided funding. Breakdown of responses by organisation/nationality is summarised in Table 1 and each category is discussed below.

⁵ France (ratified 2010, including the Optional Protocol), Germany (ratified 2009, including the Optional Protocol), Netherlands (ratified 2016), Poland (ratified 2012) and United Kingdom (ratified 2009, including the Optional Protocol). See <http://fra.europa.eu/en/theme/people-disabilities/ratified-crpd>

Figure 1: Proportional funding for Job Coach/related professions reported by partner organisations



Funding by individuals with disabilities

Four organisations indicated that some persons with disabilities funded their Job Coach/professional support worker (at least in part) individually. However, if like in some regions of Germany individuals use a so-called personal budget, this is covered by state social security agencies as a replacement for direct funding of services based on individual preference and can be regarded as an indirect state funding. This funding mechanism has a longer tradition in the UK: Throughout the United Kingdom (UK), individuals who receive Direct Payments ('self-directed support' or personal budgets) to fund health and social care needs can use these to employ a 'personal assistant' to help with employment support after assessment and approval. Many individuals and advocacy groups encourage this model as it offers maximum autonomy in the individual choice of services and the possibility of "topping up" if there are preferences not covered by public funding, however, this has a downside in that the person with disabilities (or his/her carer) has to take on the responsibilities of an employer, make tax returns and submit detailed accounts to the funder, usually the Department of Health in Northern Ireland (NI), or a Local Authority elsewhere in the UK. In the North Holland province of the Netherlands (reported by Cordaan), people with disabilities can pay for a Trajectbegeleider Consulent (counselor /Consultant) or Persoonlijk begeleider gericht op werk (a personal attendant with a focus on work). However, this was not necessarily the case in other regions, as Job Coach NL reported that individuals with disabilities were not expected to pay for employment support. A similar situation exists in Poland, which has 16 provincial administrative regions. EKON (based in the region around Warsaw) confirmed that token payments from individuals – topped up by Local Authorities – contributed to Job Coach funding, whereas in the Lodz region, Ja-Ty-My indicated that individuals with disabilities did not pay for such support.

Table 1: Funding sources reported across Partner states

Partner	Funding stream		
	Personal	Employer	State / public Agencies
France Les Genets d'Or	No	No	Les Agences Régionales de Santé (ARS) (governmental health/social care agency) Les Conseils Départementaux These 2 organizations can also finance together projects which concern each one.
Germany Grone NRW	Yes (personal budget)	No	BA (Federal Employment Agency); Job Center; LWL (Landschaftsverband Westfalen Lippe - Regional Association of Westphalia-Lippe)
Netherlands Cordaan	Yes (Trajectbegeleider Consultant - counselor Consultant/Persoonlijk begeleider gericht op werk - Personal attendant focus on work)	Yes	Gemeente UWV, the national Employee Insurance Agency
Netherlands Jobcoaches NL	No	Sometimes paid for a statutory period before jobcoaching is taken over by Institute for Employee Insurance.	The Institute for Employee Insurance pays for jobcoaching by recognized Job Coach organisations. The town which authorises a Job Coach meets the cost.
Poland EKON	Yes (symbolic payments to the assistant of person with disabilities plus remuneration paid by local authorities)	No	PFRON State Fund for Rehabilitation Of Disabled Persons (subsidy, donation grants to local authorities / NGOs to implement projects) European Social Fund (EU) money from projects grants paid by NGOs and local authorities where job coach is key role
Poland Ja-Ty-My	No	No	PFRON- State Fund for Rehabilitation Of Disabled People Labor Fund, non-governmental organizations, EU funds.
United Kingdom QUB	Some individuals with disabilities can fund their own job support with self-employed assistants, using Direct Payments (personalised budgets) if approved	No	Employment programmes (e.g. Access to Work, Workability), operated by Job Centres in UK (funded by DfC - Department for Communities - in NI NGOs/Voluntary organisations, using EU funds (and/or DfC funding in NI)

Funding by employers

Only two organisations reported that employers met some or all of the costs involved in providing a Job Coach or similar professional support, and both were situated within the Netherlands. Case studies from a recent study in Northern Ireland indicated that employing an individual with autism and/or mental health issues resulted in considerable additional time and skills commitment from colleagues and supervisors; while employers were initially prepared to offer employment opportunities on short government placement schemes, this would not be practical in the longer term without adequate resources (including staff training where necessary) provided by government or from other external funders (Dillenburg, McKerr & Jordan 2015⁶). This reinforces recommendations from the Sayce Report (2011⁷) which called for more specialized training for employers through Job Centres, and also for broader application of work programmes which could cover part-time posts and sick leave.

However, it has to be stated that some companies in fact cover JC/D-equivalent services when specifically recruiting individuals with disabilities. As an example, the German software company SAP can be mentioned. When trying to achieve an optimal placement of individuals with Aspergers' syndrome as IT specialists, SAP offers company-funded personal support by qualified colleagues⁸.

Direct funding by state/public or other agencies

All partners reported that public funding was available for Job Coach positions. Broadly speaking, funding could be provided through two paths – firstly from central and/or local government, and secondly from non-governmental organisations who are receiving government or European funding.

In the first pathway, funding comes directly from government agencies or departments and is usually delivered through state employment or social schemes. All the partner states identified central government agencies with this responsibility; Les Agences Régionales de Santé (ARS) in France, BA (Federal Employment Agency) in Germany, Gemeente UWV (national Employee Insurance Agency) in the Netherlands, and PFRON (State Fund for Rehabilitation Of Disabled Persons)/Labor Fund in Poland. In the UK, due to the existence of devolved governments, responsibility for disability employment support lies largely with the Department for Work and Pensions (Scotland, England and Wales) and the Department for Communities (Northern Ireland). Additionally, regional administrations/local authorities provide publically funded support, such as Les Conseils Départementaux in France, LWL (Landschaftsverband Westfalen Lippe – Regional Association of Westphalia-Lippe) in Germany and local authorities in the Netherlands and Poland. Local authorities in England, Wales and Scotland (Department of Health in Northern Ireland) provide social care, and if assessed as necessary, personal budgets (Direct Payments) can pay for a 'personal assistant' who can offer employment support.

With the second pathway, non-governmental (voluntary/not for profit/charitable) organisations can provide a Job Coach (or a similar professional) and partners reported that this can be funded by government, from charitable sources or for example, through the

⁶Dillenburg, K., McKerr, L. & Jordan, J-A. (2015). BASE Project (Volume 4): Qualitative Data Analysis. Free download available from <http://www.qub.ac.uk/research-centres/CentreforBehaviourAnalysis/filestore/Fileupload,620592,en.pdf#search=BASE>

⁷Sayce, L. (2011). Getting in, staying in and getting on: Disability employment support fit for the future. Free download available from https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/49779/sayce-report.pdf

⁸ „SAP fördert Autisten“ (SAP promotes persons with ASD), press release June 19th, 2013, press.sap.com

European Social Fund. Some non-governmental organisations (NGOs) can receive funding from a number of sources; for example, supported employment agencies in Northern Ireland can administer the government funded 'Access to Work' scheme, and also participate in a European-funded programme, while NGOs in Poland can receive funding from PFRON as well as the European Social Fund.

Conclusions

The regional picture of Job Coach funding which emerges is currently quite diverse and complex. As might be expected, the funding of employment and contingent social support as required by the UNCRPD for people with disabilities is dependent on regional government structures and current welfare legislation in each country. Sources of funding, and mechanisms for delivery, will vary between European states, and indeed may differ regionally within each country depending on local government arrangements. All the nations represented in this present project (France, Germany, the Netherlands, Poland, and the UK) have forms of devolved administrative/regional government with a range of responsibilities.

Accordingly the findings from partner contributions in this chapter may not be identical overall in national terms; that is to say funding methods are not always consistent within countries (see Table 1). There is also a wide range of definitions, qualifications and legal requirements for the position which currently exist (as discussed elsewhere in this paper). In descriptive terms, the position can range from 'Job Coach' to 'counselor', 'employment support worker' and 'personal assistant', terms used by the source of funding, for example from local authority or governmental departments, or from NGOs/Voluntary organisations who apply for and administer European funding. The budget responsibility for a Job Coach position may (for example) be the remit of Health/Social Care departments (such as the Direct Payments system in the UK, used by some individuals with disabilities to employ personal assistants), the Ministry for Family, Labor and Social Policy in Poland, which is responsible for the PFRON scheme, and Les Agences Régionales de Santé (ARS) in France, which implement government health and social care policies.

In other nations, funding for the position falls within the scope of employment departments, such as BA, the Federal Employment Agency in Germany, and Gemeente UWV, the national Employee Insurance Agency in the Netherlands. In some partner nations, mechanisms for delivery of funding are also organised through devolved regional administrations such as Local Authorities in England and Wales, or Les Conseils Départementaux in France, which are governed by locally elected representatives. Delivery of the service can also vary, with some Government job schemes administered through Job Centres, government agencies and NGOs/Voluntary organisations.

It can be seen that the funding situation therefore is diverse, both in comparisons between the partner states and within each nation, as a result of regional legislation and practice. It is possible that a European wide Job Coach qualification could help effectively target such wide-ranging funding if adopted as a 'quality standard' by service providers.

5. Present Qualification requirements of a Job Coach

In the introduction we stated that there is no binding definition or legal framework for the activities or a profession of a JC/D. So, the requirements of working in a position close to a JC/D also differ in the partner countries.

However, we found some widespread standards or common practices. Above all, a higher school education appears to be necessary. Five of our partners stated that a job coach, in their country, would need a school leaving certificate corresponding to the German "abitur", English "A-levels" or French "baccalauréat", that is, a graduation that would qualify the person to get accepted at a university.

Three participants stated that a secondary school education would also do.

We then tried to find out if specific types of non-academic professional qualification profiles were usual in the respective countries. Generally, this seems uncommon. We asked if someone who has served an craftsman or technical apprenticeship could be a job coach for a person with disabilities who works in the same or another non-academic working field, This turned out to be a constellation feasible in the Netherlands.

We also asked if someone who has served an apprenticeship with educational or healthcare profile could normally work as a job coach. This seems to be a more common constellation. One of our Dutch partners said that this is preferred and common practice in the Netherlands, one of our German partners added that these persons needed an additional qualification in order to fill a job coach position.

As for academic professional qualifications, we asked if it was usual that someone who studied any subject at the university would qualify as a job coach for someone with another working field; for example, a psychologist would help an administrator to get by in his new workplace. Two partners agreed.

Then we asked if someone who studied a subject at the university would work as a job coach for someone with the same working field, for example, a management scientist would help an administrator to get by. One of our participants agreed.

Three participants stated it would be common practice that someone who studied an educational subject would work as a job coach. Two participants said that someone with an academic healthcare background could usually work as a job coach, too.

We then asked if there are any specific postgraduate qualifications for the JC position even if not required by law. Four partners reported non-academic trainings. Academic JC qualifications were not reported.

In no country, mandatory education in methodic, didactic, health-related, disability-related or in general occupation and employment related questions existed. As to be expected, we found no mandatory pursued supervision, professional intervention or ethical counseling either nor are there (with the exception of the Netherlands) countrywide professional organizations, societies, boards etc..

However, public funding for JC/D services does in some cases require (again: heterogeneous) qualifications on the sublegal level described above.

6. Future qualification requirements for a JC/D

To secure professional qualifications and consumer protection, it is necessary to develop a mandatory curriculum and a legal framework for a JC/D.

Taking into regard the necessary skills and knowledge, an academic qualification should be mandatory in the longer perspective. Here, we regard a Bachelors' degree (EQF 6) as adequate, not excluding that for scientific and training activities, a Masters' degree might be helpful.

An academic qualification might be based on an dedicated JC course of studies in future. As another option, a JC qualification might be based on a B.A. e.g. in social work, ergotherapy, occupational or therapeutic subjects with a mandatory postgradual training. Here, different national curricula will be designed.

Furthermore, we see the need of a transitional solutions for those professionals already working as JC in an informal sense or in comparable functions. Here, different national traditions of a non-academic approach exist. E.g. experienced craftsmen and technicians are known to work with persons with disabilities in their respective specialities in a manner comparable to a JC/D, some of them with additional training e.g. as to psychological and educational aspects. As "new standard" academic JC staff will not be available in sufficient number in the years to come, there should also be a transitional time period in which a non-academic approach to JC should be kept open. This time period as well as transitional standards should be taken into account in the national curricula.

Additionally, a EQF 5 option (SCHE/"short cycle higher education") should remain available in those countries where such solutions exist. Here, the contents of the SCHE moduls can be derived from our curricular propositions; this option should be as well integrated in the national curricula where applicable.

We also deem a mandatory supervision and continuous postgradual qualification necessary regardless of the formal access to a JC position; here, a parallel to health care professionals may be drawn.

As the national legal framework as to labour market regulations, funding, social security systems etc. varies widely, we endorse the development of national curricula for these aspects whereas we regard a common European standard for the necessary professional knowledge as highly desirable.

7. The degree of specialisation a JC/D curriculum should provide

The following possible alternatives for a JC/D curriculum were discussed:

- a) generalistic training as Job Coach with non-mandatory specialisation
- b) „medium-specific“ training as Job Coach for all persons with disabilities
- c) „specialist“ training as Job Coach exclusively for persons with specific (groups of) disabilities
- d) „tree model“ specialist training as Job Coach for persons with disabilities in general and mandatory additional profound qualification for specific (groups of) disabilities, e.g. physical, sensory, psychiatric, cognitive disabilities

In conclusion of the discussions, we support model d), i.e. a JC/D training comprising competencies for persons with disabilities in general (which, in our model, will be partially covered by the national curricula) and a mandatory additional profound qualification for specific disabilities.

8. Integration of ideas and views of persons with disabilities

Supported employment has been shown to be an effective way for persons with disabilities to get and keep a job in the general labour market.

However, ethical issues have to be taken into account in addition to efficiency and effectiveness considerations.

Historically, support programmes often chose a so-called paternalistic approach: “experts” identifying “deficits”, organizing “supportive measures” and telling people what to do and how to do it. This “paternalistic” approach is based on good intentions, but tends to overlook individual preferences.

Nowadays, an autonomy-centered approach is generally accepted: this has led to the codification of comprehensive rights of every person without regard of existing disabilities e.g. in the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities of 2006. The UN Convention has been ratified by all EU member states and has been integrated in European and national constitutions, laws and sublegal instruments.

A JC is an institution paradigmatic for this autonomy-centered approach: a JC can only work successfully in close cooperation and on an equal footing as to his client; any activity of a JC is the result of an autonomous decision of the client or (e.g. in minors or some severe mental health conditions) his/her legal representative; every working relationship with a JC requires the possibility of an opt-out.

This being said, it is a logical conclusion that we agreed on the participation of persons with disabilities in all development stages of the job coach project.

Furthermore, the perspective of the target group should to be included in the curricular contents. This can be achieved by various measures. Among these are:

- the participation of advocacy groups or individuals with the respective condition in teaching and practical training
- the use of relevant autobiographic literature
- the cooperation of advocacy groups in quality control and evaluation
- in participative research designs

9. Outlook

These suggestions are intended to be the base for a European framework for qualification and professional standards of a Job Coach specialized to support persons with disabilities. Whereas the general standards should be applicable to Job Coaches working for persons with various conditions, we decided to focus on three major clinical pictures, more precisely, autism spectrum disorder, psychiatric disorders and intellectual disabilities. In these conditions, we regard the activities of a specialized JC/D as especially crucial for integration and success in the labour market. Of course, this is not to underestimate or negate the importance of Job Coaching in other situations. So, further research and elaboration focusing on other conditions would be appreciated by all partners even if they weren't feasible due to time and funding restrictions in this project.

With regard to the three conditions mentioned above, we will then have a closer look at the competence profile a JC/D should have. The resulting manuals and curricular contents can also serve as an orientation for other relevant conditions.

This is especially true because given disabilities have the potential to cause or promote secondary issues. For instance, a person dependent on a wheelchair might suffer from depression, too. Hence the guidelines and curricular contents will not only be useful for the specific disabilities mentioned above but may also serve as an additional instrument for persons with other conditions.